

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8242
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 1974

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, SOPN, CU, ET
SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN MEDIA ON MENGISTU VISIT TO CUBA

REF: HAVANA 1100

1. EMBASSY ADDIS JUST RECEIVED REFTEL THROUGH COLLECTIVE ADDRESS AND HAS REVIEWED LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF MENGISTU'S APRIL 26 SPEECH. ONLY PRESS REPORT OF SPEECH HERE WAS PRESNA LATINA WIRE SERVICE STORY FEATURED ON FRONT PAGE OF APRIL 28 GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED ETHIOPIAN HERALD, WHICH INCLUDED MENGISTU PREDICTION THAT ERITREAN SECESSIONIST GROUPS WOULD BE LIQUIDATED BY PEOPLE THEMSELVES. ETHIOPIAN MEDIA IN GENERAL HAS BEEN QUIESCENT ON ERITREA ISSUE SINCE MENGISTU'S RETURN LAST WEEK FROM HAVANA, LEADING SOME OBSERVERS TO SPECULATE THAT EITHER HE DID NOT RECEIVE KIND OF COMMITMENT OF ERITREA FROM CASTRO THAT HE WANTED OR THAT HE IS STILL AWAITING CUBAN RESPONSE TO PRESUMED REQUEST TO USE CUBAN FORCES IN ACTIVE COMBAT ROLE IN ERITREA. OTHER PRESS COVERAGE OF MENGISTU VISIT WAS OF JOINT COMMUNIQUE, WHICH GLOSSED OVER ERITREA QUESTION, AND OF MENGISTU'S RETURN TO ETHIOPIA.
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2. DESPITE MUTUALLY EFFUSIVE PRAISE, IT APPEARS MENGISTU AND CASTRO MAY HAVE SOME POLICY DIFFERENCES OVER ERITREA AND MENGISTU'S DESIRE TO USE CUBAN TROOPS THERE. ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN RELIABLY REPORTED THAT ETHIOPIAN GOVT (PMGSE) IS COMMITTED TO A 2-3 YEAR CAMPAIGN IN ERITREA, ITS KNOWN DESIRE TO USE CUBAN TROOPS TO HASTEN CONCLUSION OF CAMPAIGN WOULD

APPEAR TO CONTRADICT THIS. IT THEN MUST BE ASSUMED THAT MENGISTU EITHER BELIEVES ETHIOPIAN TROOPS BY THEMSELVES ARE NOT PRESENTLY CAPABLE OF DEFEATING ERITREANS (PROBABLY CORRECT) OR THAT HE DESIRES MORE RAPID END TO ERITREAN PROBLEM IN ORDER TO CONSOLIDATE REVOLUTION INTERNALLY AND DIMINISH PMGSE DEPENDENCE ON SOVIETS AND CUBANS. THEY ARE STILL ESSENTIAL FOR ETHIOPIA'S TERRITORIAL SECURITY.

3. THUS, SOVIETS/CUBANS MAY FIND THEMSELVES IN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION WITH MENGISTU. IF THEY REFUSE TO ASSIST THE PMGSE IN ERITREA IT WOULD REINFORCE CURRENTLY SUPPRESSED ETHIOPIAN SUSPICIONS ABOUT THEIR MOTIVES, GIVE APPEARANCE OF DELIBERATELY PROLONGING ETHIOPIAN DEPENDENCE ON THEM TO ESTABLISH PRO-SOVIET/CUBAN BASE IN ETHIOPIA MORE FIRMLY AND CAUSE ETHIOPIANS TO WONDER WITH WHOM SOVIET/CUBAN SYMPATHIES LIE IN ERITREA. RESULT OF POLICY RIFT COULD BE FAR MORE CIRCUMSCRIBED ROLE FOR BOTH SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN ETHIOPIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND GRADUAL REDUCTION OF INFLUENCE ON PMGSE FOREIGN POLICY. IT IS, HOWEVER, PREMATURE TO PREDICT SUCH A RIFT WILL ACTUALLY OCCUR.
MATHERON

NOTE BY OC/T; NOT PASSED HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE.

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